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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

From: Albert E. Fontenot, Jr. **(Signed April 27, 2021)**
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Subject: Changes to the Integrated Partnership and Communications (IPC) Operation

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This memorandum documents changes to the Integrated Partnership and Communications (IPC) operation since the publication of the [IPC Detailed Operational Plan](#) in 2016 and subsequent publication of documentation describing the implementation phase of the operation in 2020 [IPC Updates](#). The Detailed Operational Plan described mainly the planning phases of this operation, while the update document described in greater detail the final components of the operation, their various interactions, and the stakeholders for each output.

This operation was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Public events were canceled, and messaging during both the self-response and the Nonresponse Followup operation phases needed to be adapted to this situation. In addition, the schedule of operations was impacted, which also required changes to the schedule of communications. Below we outline the areas described in the update document where plans were adapted in response to the pandemic. Other changes to this operation in the implementation phase are also noted below.

The operation purpose, background, audiences, and stakeholders are unchanged (Update document sections 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2.1).

Section 3.2.2 Promotional materials and items available for use were adapted and optimized to reflect the changes in the country. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital distribution became the primary method for sharing materials and resources with established and potential partners. The Census Bureau relied on all its digital properties, but especially the 2020 Census website and direct email contact, to share materials. Materials such as fact sheets, brochures, posters, social media toolkits and graphics, and other resources were publicly available for download on the 2020 Census website for partner and general audience use. For 2020 Census promotional items that could not be distributed digitally—such as pens, water bottles, drawstring backpacks, tote bags, and chip clips—the Census

Bureau shipped those items to partners for their own outreach, as resources allowed. Further, in light of the pandemic, the Census Bureau sent promotional items to partners for inclusion in meal kits and care packages to be distributed in communities that were significantly impacted by COVID-19.

The Census Bureau also revised existing partnership materials and produced additional materials to reflect the new circumstances. For instance, one new item we created and distributed to partners was a half-page flyer that encouraged self-response among rural audiences, especially in areas where door-to-door enumeration was significantly delayed. In addition, because of COVID-19, the in-person events had a small number of participants. The National Partnership Program (NPP) and the Community Partnership and Engagement Program (CPEP) pivoted and found alternate uses for the promotional materials and items. These programs sought out venues in communities where there was a need for continuation of services and places that were open, such as food banks and school cafeterias.

Section 3.2.3 Statistics in Schools

Materials were adapted for an online education environment. The Statistics In Schools program created hundreds of materials for the 2020 Census and worked with partners to promote the materials' use in schools and at home. Because of the pandemic, most school districts were closed. This provided a great opportunity for parents and students to use the in-school materials at home. The program also held live and virtual events and produced free worksheets, maps, videos, and an "Everyone Counts" song to engage students and build awareness of the 2020 Census. Resources targeting parents and caregivers were also developed for at-home use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 3.2.4 Public Relations and Crisis Management

The Census Bureau defines a crisis as a situation that significantly threatens the health and safety of Census Bureau employees or public confidence in the security of Census Bureau data, interferes with the Census Bureau's ability to carry out operations effectively, or damages the Census Bureau's reputation. The role of crisis communications in the campaign was to anticipate potential threats and respond appropriately when challenging situations emerged. An emphasis on preparedness was important in helping the Census Bureau plan for unforeseen events, issues, and disruptions that could hinder our ability to obtain a complete and accurate count. We sought to quickly manage and mitigate any issues before they escalated to crises. Coordination among multiple Census Bureau teams was key to delivering important messages clearly and effectively when rapid response was needed. Our crisis communication efforts included threat monitoring and social media listening, and we deployed messaging to make public announcements and mitigate the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

The Census Bureau began 2020 Census crisis communication management efforts in 2017. The purpose of this area was the same through implementation. The final scope of this component included pandemic communications related to the impact on census operations and schedules. With the unforeseen circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid spread of information in our digital environment, crisis communications were more important than ever.

In light of the pandemic and variation in emergency response by region, the communications campaign sought to emphasize to all audiences the ease of responding to the census online, over the phone, or by mail without having a face-to-face interaction with a census taker. Communications also needed to relay information about enumeration activities and timing, especially for those anticipating in-person enumeration, such as people living on tribal lands, in group quarters, and in remote areas. Public

relations, media outreach, partner outreach, and frequent website updates were critical activities for conveying operational changes to the public. Other campaign communication tactics, such as media briefings, were canceled or held virtually when possible.

Section 3.2.5 Enterprise Communications

This component is unchanged.

Section 3.2.6 Website Development and Digital Activities

This component is unchanged, but the website had increased visibility while it was used for communicating census operation plans and schedules.

Section 3.2.7 Social Media

This component had an increased role in communicating changes in operation plans and schedules because of the pandemic. This component was designed as a flexible medium to address current issues, and in implementation of how both pandemic and non-pandemic issues were handled. For example, social media proved especially valuable given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as more people were staying home and using social and digital technology at high rates. Social media posts helped answer common questions and increase census participation. This was beneficial given that the pandemic limited in-person opportunities for people to talk with Census Bureau employees or partners speaking on behalf of the 2020 Census communications campaign. Our social media approach included working with social media influencers, harnessing the capabilities of customer service chatbots, and taking advantage of livestream and other technology to capture audience interest. Social media tactics and content were closely integrated with public and media relations, digital paid media, the 2020 Census website, and campaign optimization activities. The Census Bureau also created and deployed a variety of paid advertising assets, including keyword search ads, social media ads, digital banner ads, and sponsored content.

Section 3.2.8 Paid Advertising

Creative assets were revised during the campaign to emphasize the safety measures that the Census Bureau had implemented to protect staff members and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised creative assets stressed that the count would go on, that census participation was critical, and that respondents could complete the census safely and quickly from their homes. We also messaged that if households did not self-respond or needed help responding, census takers would come to their door to enumerate them. Most media channels could make updates to creative assets within hours or days of receiving instructions, however, it was typically easier to adjust digital media assets than it was traditional media assets because of time and resource constraints.

Some advertising was adjusted to communicate changes in operation plans and schedules related to the pandemic and to encourage participation and cooperation.

Paid media plans were adjusted considerably over the course of the 2020 Census communications campaign, but especially from March 2020 forward because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One key shift was the cancellation of live events, including in-person concerts and cultural festivals as well as televised live sports, awards shows, and other entertainment. Most events in which the Census Bureau had planned to participate through paid partnerships or media sponsorships were canceled or transitioned to virtual forums, which significantly reduced or eliminated key advertising opportunities to reach many audience groups. Event cancellations especially affected outreach to diverse and non-English-speaking audiences—many of which were considered hard to count.

Section 3.2.9 Recruitment Advertising

The goal of field recruitment activities is to recruit the maximum number of 2020 Census employees in the right geographic locations at the lowest reasonable cost. To achieve this goal, we reached out to former Census Bureau employees, particularly those who had previously served as census takers. We also capitalized on social and paid digital media trends to maximize the public's exposure to 2020 Census opportunities. Further, to build strength of messaging and maintain consistency of brand application, we linked recruitment marketing materials to the overall 2020 Census advertising campaign.

Recruiting was also affected by the pandemic and other external factors. This platform was designed to be responsive to these external factors. Some changes made regarding recruiting included that the Census Bureau created recruitment marketing materials in multiple languages and developed a centralized recruiting resource—the [2020 Census jobs website](#)—to generate interest in decennial census jobs. An added paid media component enabled the Census Bureau to rapidly expand our employee base, helping ensure that enumerators could count people across the country once COVID-19 safety measures were implemented.

While recruiting and maintaining such a large base of temporary employees was challenging for the Census Bureau, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic, hiring efforts were successful. We hired a nationwide team sufficient to complete the enumeration.

Beyond the 2020 Census jobs page, most recruitment materials and advertising assets were not revised to directly address the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in May 2020, the Census Bureau updated our recruitment videos to reflect new safety guidance for census takers and the public. We created animated videos in English and Spanish that portrayed census takers visiting houses while wearing masks and maintaining safe social distance from the respondents. In sharing these new videos with prospective employee audiences, we reinforced our commitment to prioritizing the health and safety of Census Bureau employees and the public while conducting the critical decennial count.

Communications support for operations that involve or require interaction with the public was part of the purpose of the IPC operation. This became particularly important because of the pandemic.

Section 3.4 IPC Phases, Section 3.4.3 Execution

In Execution, the various planned phases of the operation were all affected by the pandemic. In particular, the schedule, plans, and key messaging for the Motivation, Reminder, Thank You, and Dissemination Phases were impacted by the extension and adaptation of field operations. The particular changes for each phase are discussed below.

The final dates for the Motivation Phase were extended for a period of March through July 2020. During this phase, the campaign motivated individuals to complete the census questionnaire and to encourage participation among their friends, families, and communities. As this phase began in mid-March, COVID-19 had fully taken hold across the country and represented a broad threat to public health. The Census Bureau responded by canceling all in-person campaign events, temporarily suspending field operations, and otherwise limiting in-person interactions between employees and with members of the public. The Motivation Phase was originally planned to end in May. However, in June, the Census Bureau decided to extend the Motivation Phase through July because of field operations suspensions and data collection delays. The extended Motivation Phase surge encompassed a series of regional, weeklong activations. In July 2020, the activations rolled out across multiple communication channels: We aimed to surround the

public with census messaging and to generate a wave of self-response. The Census Bureau used a rolling format to deploy approximately two regional surges per week for five weeks. These surges involved region-specific outreach, and all communication tactics were developed in coordination with the Census Bureau's regional office staffs in Chicago, Atlanta, Denver, Philadelphia, New York City, and Los Angeles. The Census Bureau produced assets in English and Spanish for television, radio, social and digital video, digital banners, and print channels. Videos were a key asset for the extended Motivation Phase surge. We created 22 videos, including 13 videos for audiences nationwide and nine region-specific videos. These efforts included a mix of paid traditional and digital media, as well as pitching news stories to journalists, conducting media relations, organic social media, partner outreach, website content development, and 2020 Statistics In Schools activities.

The final dates of the Reminder Phase were extended from August through October 2020. During this time, the Census Bureau quickly planned and launched several communication "surge" efforts during these two phases. The surge efforts comprised a variety of integrated activities that sought to break through the busy media landscape and encourage census response, both among the audience at large and in communities with low response rates. We launched paid newspaper advertising in 21 additional languages, along with digital and search advertising in 11 additional languages, which are beyond the originally planned 13 for a total of 45 languages. The Census Bureau sent three waves of emails directly to households in census block groups with low response rates to encourage their participation in the census. The Census Bureau had never targeted communications about the decennial census at such a granular level. Through this effort, the Census Bureau reached the email inboxes of more than 48 million recipients—many of them in traditionally hard-to-count audience groups—and generated more than 400,000 visits to the 2020 Census website. The Census Bureau conducted two waves of targeted outreach and public service announcement (PSA) distribution. The first wave focused on national and local media outlets across the country, and the second focused on a smaller set of media markets that had large populations of traditionally hard-to-count households with young children. Collectively, the PSAs garnered more than 13 million impressions on radio and TV stations across the country. Response rate growth increased considerably during this delayed Reminder Phase outreach.

Additionally, the Thank You Phase was scheduled for August through December 2020. **While a formal thank-you phase was included in the original campaign planning, this phase was suspended because of the large-scale operational changes and extended response period. However, the Census Bureau acknowledges that the count could not have happened without the support of respondents, partners, and stakeholders nationwide. We are expressing gratitude to these groups through targeted communications in 2021, as appropriate and as resources allow. We are also using our web, social media, email, and other permanent properties to foster ongoing engagement with the audience at large. We will encourage members of these audiences to review the census results when summary data becomes publicly available.**

Finally, the Dissemination Phase was scheduled to begin in January 2021. The data dissemination phase, like the thank-you phase, was included in the original campaign planning but was ultimately suspended. The Census Bureau is communicating and promoting the availability of the 2020 Census results through targeted outreach, as appropriate and as resources allow. We are disseminating data and relevant materials to specific partners and audience groups. We are also using our web, social media, email, and other permanent properties to encourage audiences to use the data and to continue interacting with the Census Bureau after the decennial census.

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series documents significant decisions, actions, and accomplishments of the 2020 Census Program for the purpose of informing stakeholders, coordinating interdivisional efforts, and documenting important historical changes.

A memorandum generally will be added to this series for any decision or documentation that meets the following criteria:

1. A major program-level decision that will affect the overall design or have significant effect on 2020 Census operations or systems.
2. A major policy decision or change that will affect the overall design or significantly impact 2020 Census operations or systems.
3. A report that documents the research and testing for 2020 Census operations or systems.

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